

NEWS

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THE FIRST 50 DAYS OF THE CONTRACT ON AMERICA -- Top Ten Hits on America

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WASHINGTON -- "When over 300 Republican candidates signed Newt Gingrich's Contract with America, most Americans had no idea what the consequences would really be," *Congressman George Miller (D-7-Calif.)* said Wednesday. "The Contract goes far beyond its stated goal of making the federal government smaller and more responsible; in fact, the Contract eliminates fundamental protections that most Americans have come to expect and treasure in their daily lives. The first 50 days of the Contract clearly show that the Contract is a direct hit on basic American values. It is indeed a Contract 'On' America, not 'with' America, and as such the Contract should be broken.

"The New Congress' first successes were embraced by Democrats and Republicans alike -- congressional reform. On a bi-partisan basis, we voted to eliminate three congressional committees, reduce committee staff by one-third and to make Congress adhere to the same workplace laws it requires of private businesses. These measures were enacted without delay and without opposition.

"But now, under the guise of lofty titles such as the Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act, Newt Gingrich's revolution has set about to gut the efforts that have achieved decades of social and economic progress in this country. Newt Gingrich promised in *TV Guide* that the House would VOTE on the ten elements of the Contract with America within 100 days. He did not promise these bills would pass the house or become law. And he did not promise that these would be the best bills for this country. He just promised that he would make the trains run on time for 100 days. Everyone likes the trains to run on time, but most people like to know where the train is going. The Contract announced in *TV Guide* does not tell you that.

"Below is another way of looking at the Contract. It tells you where this train is heading. Listed are ten of the most offensive and dangerous *specific* elements of the Contract that have passed a congressional committee or the full House of Representatives within the first 50 days, which is marked this Wednesday. Stay tuned for the second 50 days."

(more)

50-day Top Ten Hits in Contract *On* America

DAY 1

1. The Contract On America preserves the influence of money and lobbyists over lawmakers. On Jan. 3, the very first day of the Contract, House Republicans voted to allow lobbyists to continue giving gifts to lawmakers. The Republican position allows lobbyists to curry favor with the new majority while the most far reaching elements of the Republican agenda are considered in Committee and on the House floor. Rejecting the gift ban symbolizes the Republican loyalty to special interest lobbyists.

2. The Contract On America is a hit on the Constitution of the United States. Also on Jan. 3, the Republicans began their assault on the Constitution of the United States. The Republican majority supported Newt Gingrich's call to change House rules and require a 3/5 majority of the House necessary for any increase in the tax rate. No one is in favor of raising taxes, but this provision violates the constitutional protection of majority rule and makes it more likely that wealthy Americans will continue to pay a lower share of their income in taxes than other Americans. This extreme provision is now being challenged in court.

DAY 24

3. The Contract On America threatens billions of dollars in Social Security to the elderly. On January 26, the House Republicans voted down an amendment to protect Social Security Trust Fund from the indiscriminate budget ax of the Balanced Budget constitutional amendment. Prior to the vote, Republican Leader Dick Armey said if the public knew the details of the budget cutting strategy it would be angered and the measure wouldn't pass.

DAY 39

4. The Contract On America would leave hundreds of closing military bases environmentally unusable. On February 10, House Republicans on the Appropriations Committee voted to cut \$150 million for environmental cleanup of closed and closing military bases. If toxic waste, radioactive material and other pollution are not cleaned up, these facilities will not become new economic opportunities for the local communities. This measure stifles economic growth and job creation opportunities in communities across the country. This supplemental appropriations bill is scheduled for the House floor today.

5. The Contract takes money away from states to build new prisons. On February 10, the House passed a Republican bill that places onerous restrictions on the ability of states to qualify

for prison construction money approved by Congress last year. According to the Attorney General, under Newt Gingrich's plan *no* state would qualify for prison construction grants. So while Congress has voted to require prisoners to serve longer sentences, this new Republican bill would deny states the assistance we approved last year to build prisons to house those criminals.

DAY 42

6. The Contract On America weakens anti-crime efforts by local police. On February 14, the House passed a bill that would eliminate the community policing program and ensures that local law enforcement agencies would have less money to fight crime than under the crime bill signed into law last year. The community police program passed by Congress last year would place 100,000 new officers on the street over 5 years. The Republican block grant passed by the House will reduce the amount of money available under the program and will not provide communities the assurance that they will have additional police officers that Congress and the President approved last year.

7. The Contract On America would ensure that local government will face millions more homeless and truant citizens on their streets. On February 13, far from ending welfare as we know it, the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources voted to increase homelessness. The Subcommittee voted to kick welfare recipients off of government support after five years without making one single requirement that they go to work, train for work or look for work for the first two years they receive assistance. That's a waste of federal taxpayers dollars and it is a recipe for failure. Every Republican voted against an amendment that would have required welfare recipients to look for work or start working from the moment they join the welfare roles.

DAY 44

8. The Contract On America weakens breast cancer screening. On February 15, every Republican on the Commerce Committee voted against a Democratic amendment to protect women's health issues from risk assessment under title III of H.R. 9, Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act. As a result, this bill as reported by the committee, puts in jeopardy standards for the administering and analysis of mammograms, considered a vital element of controlling breast cancer which kills 50,000 women each year.

9. The Contract On America abandons families with children with disabilities. On February 15, every Republican on the Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee voted to eliminate Supplemental Security Income assistance for children with certain medical disabilities unless they are destined to be institutionalized. The program is intended to prevent families with disabled

children from becoming destitute. The new standard for assistance would be so onerous as to virtually abandon thousands of young children.

DAY 50

10. The Contract On America wipes out the successful nutrition programs for vulnerable children that have helped avoid life-long disabilities and disease. On February 22, the Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee considers and is expected to approve legislation to block grant proven federal nutrition programs for low-income mothers and children. WIC, school breakfast, school lunch, and child care nutrition assistance would all be consolidated into one program at a reduced level of funding. The result is that thousands of children that benefit from these programs will be left without any guarantee of adequate nutrition. These programs have never been accused of massive fraud, waste or abuse. They have been noted by both parties as being effective, but now the Republicans are voting to slash them.

What to look for in the next 50 days...

Contract Provisions to be Considered in Next 50 Days Will Jeopardize the Future of America.

During the next 50 days of House consideration of the Gingrich "Contract with America," Republicans will support bills that would harm most Americans.

Student Loans. Republicans in Congress are turning their backs on students and middle-class families. Despite all of the Republican rhetoric about the importance of education, the Contract cuts student financial aid. Today, the Federal government helps students with their educational costs by paying the interest on their loans while the students are in school. But all that will change if the Republicans have their way during the next 50 days. If enacted, the Republican measures in the Contract would eliminate in-school interest subsidies altogether, thereby increasing the cost of college for students and their families by \$20 billion over the next 5 years.

Capital Gains. The centerpiece of the tax provisions in the Contract is a cut in capital gains taxes. Such a cut would benefit only the wealthiest Americans, while leaving the rest of the nation "holding the bag." The Treasury Department estimates that, over ten years, the Republican capital gains tax cut would result in a revenue loss totaling \$183 billion. The decrease in Federal revenues will contribute to the deficit, which will lead to either an increase in taxes or more cuts in essential services. Either way, the middle class will have to pick up the tab for a tax cut for the rich.

Children. Children will perhaps be the biggest losers during the next 50 days. The Contract

Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.)

punishes children for the faults of their parents by denying assistance to mothers under 18 and to parents who have received welfare benefits for five years, without regard to the needs of the children. Additionally, under the Contract, states will be permitted to deny services to abused and neglected children. The Contract also reduces court oversight over foster care and child welfare programs, leaving children and their advocates to fend for themselves.

Safety and Health. Important quality of life measures are in jeopardy if the Republican regulatory reform initiatives are enacted. The "Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act" would endanger health and safety standards by handicapping the ability of the federal government to enact protective regulations. The cost-benefit analysis and the annual cap on regulations would tie up the regulatory process in litigation, while setting an arbitrary limit on protective regulations.

Legal Reform. The middle class also loses out under the so-called "Common Sense Legal Reform Act." Under the Act, only wealthy Americans will be able to sue for damages in court if they suffer an injury. Under current law, an average American can afford to seek justice in court because a plaintiff is responsible only for his or her own legal costs, which can be limited under a contingency fee arrangement. This Act reverses this two-hundred year old "American Rule" and replaces it with the British system where the plaintiff who loses at trial (on merit or on a technicality) must pay the legal costs of the defendant.

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